AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) A method for detecting ~~measuring~~ protease in a biological sample which comprises the steps of:

(1) contacting~~bringing~~ one of two substantially continuous slices of a biological sample ~~into contact~~ with a thin membrane that~~which~~ comprises a protease substrate together with a crosslinking~~hardening~~ agent and is formed on a surface of a support;

(2) detecting a~~the~~ trace of digestion formed on the thin membrane by the action of protease; and

(3) comparing the trace of digestion with a histopathological preparation prepared from the other slice.

3.-18. (Canceled)

19. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the protease substrate is selected from the group consisting of collagen, gelatin, proteoglycan, fibronectin, laminin, elastin, and casein.

20. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the biological sample is isolated or collected from a patient.

21. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein said detecting is performed by using a thin membrane containing one or more substances selected from the group consisting of

metals, metal oxides, pigments and dyes, and having a maximum transmission density of 0.01 or higher at a wavelength ranging from 400 nm to 700 nm.

22. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the protease is matrix metalloproteinase.

23. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of chrome alum, chromium acetate, formaldehyde, glyoxal, glutaraldehyde, dimethylolurea, methyloldimethylhydantoin, 2,3-dihydroxydioxane, carbenium, 2-napthalenesulfonate, 1,1-bispyrrolidino-1-chloro-, pyridinium, 1-morpholinocarbonyl-3-(sulfonatoaminomethyl)-, 1,3-bisvinylsulfonyl-2-propanol, 1,2-bis(vinylsulfonylacetamido)-ethane, bis(vinylsulfonylmethyl) ether, 1,3,5-triacryloyl-hexahydro-s-triazine, bis(vinylsulfonyl)methane, 2,4-dichloro-6-hydroxy-s-triazine, mucochloric acid, mucophenoxychloric acid, an isoxazole compound, dialdehyde starch, and 2-chloro-6-hydroxytriazinylated gelatin.

24. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the crosslinking agent comprises a vinylsulfonyl group.